

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please ~~cancel~~ claims ~~1-40~~, without prejudice.

Please ~~add~~ claims ~~41-131~~, as follows:

41. A communications system for providing bi-directional electronic communications between users at client computers on a computer network and a global communications network, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, the system comprising:

a satellite receiver operating to receive download data from the global communications network;

a plurality of client computers on a computer network;

a server computer in electronic communication with said satellite receiver and in electronic communication with the computer network, said server computer operating to receive the download data from said satellite receiver and operating to route the download data to said plurality of client computers via the computer network; and

a communications device, said communications device being in electronic communications with said server computer, upload data being provided to said communications device via said server computer, and said upload data being sent to the global communications network via said communications device.

42. The communications system as defined in claim 41 wherein said computer network is a local area network.

43. The communications system as defined in claim 41 wherein said computer network is a wide area network.

44. The communications system as defined in claim 42 wherein said server computer is programmed to route the download data to said plurality of client computers on the local area network irrespective of the client computers' operating systems such that said server computer does not require the same operating system for each client computer of the plurality of client computers.

45. The communications system of claim 42 wherein the upload data is sent at a substantially lower rate than the download data is being received.

46. The communications system of claim 42 wherein the bi-directional electronic communications is asymmetric.

47. The communications system of claim 42 wherein said communications device is capable of receiving additional download data.

48. The communications system of claim 42 wherein the communications device comprises a land-line communications device.

49. The communications system of claim 42 wherein the communications device comprises a wireless communications device.

50. The communications system as defined in claim 42 further comprising a storage medium wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

51. The communications system as defined in claim 50 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said plurality of client computers.

52. The communications system as defined in claim 51 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

53. The communications system as defined in claim 42 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.

54. The communications system as defined in claim 42 wherein said server computer routes the download data using a standard local area network protocol.

55. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for providing bi-directional electronic communications between a plurality of client computers on a computer network and a global communications network, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, wherein the instructions comprise executable instructions for implementing a method comprising:

receiving download data from a satellite receiver in electronic communication with a server computer;

routing the download data to the plurality of client computers via the computer network;

receiving upload data from said plurality of client computers via the computer network;

and

transmitting the upload data via a communications device to the information provider.

56. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein said computer network is a local area network.

57. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein said computer network is a wide area network.

58. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 56 wherein said server computer is programmed to route the download data to said plurality of client computers on the local area network irrespective of the client computers' operating systems such that said server computer does not require the same operating system for each client computer of the plurality of client computers.

59. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein the communications device comprises a land-line communications device.

60. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 59 wherein said land-line communications device uses an ISDN connection.

61. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 59 wherein said land-line communications device uses a T1 connection.

62. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 59 wherein said land-line communications device comprises a modem.

63. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 59 wherein said land-line communications device uses a frame-relay network.

64. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 59 wherein said land-line communications device uses ATM.

65. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein the communications device comprises a wireless communications device.

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66. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 65 wherein the wireless communications device uses a satellite link.

67. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein said computer-readable medium is included in the server computer.

68. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein said communications device comprises a satellite-based communications device.

69. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein the server computer further comprises a storage medium and wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

70. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 69 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said plurality of client computers.

71. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 70 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

72. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.

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73. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 56 wherein said server computer routes the download data using a standard local area network protocol.

74. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 55 wherein said server computer operates to route the download data to a plurality of computer networks.

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75. A method for providing bi-directional electronic communications between users at a plurality of client computers on a computer network and an information provider, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, which comprises:

receiving download data from a satellite receiver in electronic communication with a server computer;

routing the download data to the plurality of client computers via the computer network;

receiving upload data from said plurality of client computers via the computer network;

and

transmitting the upload data via a communications device to the information provider.

76. The method as defined in claim 75 wherein said computer network is a local area network.

77. The method as defined in claim 75 wherein said computer network is a wide area network.

78. The method as defined in claim 75 wherein said server computer is programmed to route the download data to said plurality of client computers on the computer network irrespective of the client computers' operating systems such that said server computer does not require the same operating system for each client computer of the plurality of client computers.

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79. The method as defined in claim 75 wherein the server computer further comprises a storage medium and wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

80. The method as defined in claim 79 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said plurality of client computers.

81. The method as defined in claim 80 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

82. The method as defined in claim 75 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.

83. The method as defined in claim 76 wherein said server computer routes the download data using a standard local area network protocol.

84. The method as defined in claim 75 wherein said server computer operates to route the download data to a plurality of computer networks.

85. A communications system for providing bi-directional electronic communications between at least one client computer on a computer network and a global communications network, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, the system comprising:

a satellite receiver operating to receive download data from the global communications network;

a plurality of client computers on a computer network;

a server computer in electronic communication with said satellite receiver and in electronic communication with the computer network, said server computer operating to receive the download data from said satellite receiver and operating to route the download data to at least one computer of said plurality of client computers via the computer network; and

a communications device, said communications device being in electronic communications with said server computer, upload data being provided to said communications device via said server computer, and said upload data being sent to the global communications network via said communications device.

86. The communications system as defined in claim 85 wherein said computer network is a local area network.

87. The communications system as defined in claim 85 wherein said computer network is a wide area network.

88. The communications system as defined in claim 86 further comprising a storage medium wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

89. The communications system as defined in claim 88 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said at least one of said plurality of client computers.

90. The communications system as defined in claim 89 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

91. The communications system as defined in claim 88 wherein said storage medium is included in said server computer.

92. The communications system as defined in claim 86 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.

93. The communications system as defined in claim 86 wherein said server computer routes the download data using a standard local area network protocol.

94. The communications system as defined in claim 86 wherein said server computer operates to route the download data to a plurality of local area networks.

95. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for providing bi-directional electronic communications between at least one computer on a computer network and a global communications network, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, wherein the instructions comprise executable instructions for implementing a method comprising:

receiving download data from a satellite receiver in electronic communication with a server computer;

routing the download data to at least one computer of a plurality of computers via the computer network;

receiving upload data from said at least one computer via the computer network; and
transmitting the upload data via a communications device to the information provider.

96. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 95 wherein said computer network is a local area network.

97. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 95 wherein said computer network is a wide area network.

98. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 95 wherein the server computer further comprises a storage medium and wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

99. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 98 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said at least one client computer.

100. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 99 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

101. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 95 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.

102. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 96 wherein said server computer routes the download data using a standard local area network protocol.

103. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 95 wherein said server computer operates to route the download data to a plurality of computer networks.

104. A method for providing bi-directional electronic communications between a client computer on a computer network and an information provider, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, which comprises:

receiving download data from a satellite receiver in electronic communication with a server computer;

routing the download data to a client computer via the computer network;

receiving upload data from said client computer via the computer network; and

transmitting the upload data via a communications device to the information provider.

105. The method as defined in claim 104 wherein said computer network is a local area network.

106. The method as defined in claim 104 wherein said computer network is a wide area network.

107. The method as defined in claim 104 wherein the server computer further comprises a storage medium and wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

108. The method as defined in claim 107 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said client computer.

109. The method as defined in claim 108 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

110. The method as defined in claim 104 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.

111. The method as defined in claim 105 wherein said server computer routes the download data using a standard local area network protocol.

112. The method as defined in claim 104 wherein said server computer operates to route the download data to a plurality of computer networks.

113. A communications system for providing bi-directional electronic communications between a client computer and a global communications network, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, the system comprising:

a satellite receiver operating to receive download data from the global communications network;

a client computer;

a server computer in electronic communication with said satellite receiver and in electronic communication with the client computer, said server computer operating to receive the download data from said satellite receiver and operating to route the download data to the client computer; and

a communications device, said communications device being in electronic communications with said server computer, upload data being provided to said communications device via said server computer, and said upload data being sent to the global communications network via said communications device.

114. The communications system as defined in claim 113 further comprising a storage medium wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

115. The communications system as defined in claim 114 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said client computer.

116. The communications system as defined in claim 115 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

117. The communications system as defined in claim 114 wherein said storage medium is included in said server computer.

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118. The communications system as defined in claim 113 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.

119. The communications system as defined in claim 118 wherein said server computer routes the download data using a standard local area network protocol.

120. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for providing bi-directional electronic communications between a client computer and a global communications network, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, wherein the instructions comprise executable instructions for implementing a method comprising:

receiving download data from a satellite receiver in electronic communication with a server computer, the server computer being in electronic communication with the client computer;

routing the download data to the client computer;

receiving upload data from the client computer; and

transmitting the upload data via a communications device to the information provider.

121. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 120 wherein the server computer further comprises a storage medium and wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

122. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 121 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said client computer.

123. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 122 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

124. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 121 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.

125. The computer-readable medium as defined in claim 124 wherein said server computer routes the download data using a standard local area network protocol.

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126. A method for providing bi-directional electronic communications between a client computer and an information provider, the electronic communications including both the reception and transmission of data, which comprises:

receiving download data from a satellite receiver in electronic communication with a server computer, the server computer being in electronic communication with the client computer;

routing the download data to the client computer;

receiving upload data from the client computer; and

transmitting the upload data via a communications device to the information provider.

127. The method as defined in claim 126 wherein the server computer further comprises a storage medium and wherein said server computer's routing of the download data includes storing the download data on said storage medium.

128. The method as defined in claim 127 wherein said storage medium is an intermediate storage medium and wherein the download data is stored on said intermediate storage medium prior to receipt of the download data by said client computer.

129. The method as defined in claim 128 wherein said intermediate storage medium includes a cache.

130. The method as defined in claim 126 wherein said server computer runs a server operating system.